HARAMBEE

FLAME

Vol. ten No. 10

October 1989

In This Issue:

EDITORIAL: The $116 Tennis Shoes; LETTER: Biblical Researcher Speaks Of Her Motivations; FROM OTHER SOURCES: Underground Radio Seeks To Educate, Virginia Beach, Africans In Britain, Gbadolite Accord; POETRY: by Walt Gholson.

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The $116 Tennis Shoes

On the September 17th edition of "Kaleidoscope," Ben Gray, the program's host, conducted an interview with three representatives of Mad(Men Against Destruction) Dads. The interview covered a number of topics related to the group's efforts toward diminishing the level of drug and gang activity in Omaha. Following this interview, Ben talked with a young African man who identified himself as having been a gang member. He spoke about why he had been in the gang, why he had gotten out of it, and what things he has been doing since. At one point, Ben asked the young Brother a question concerning the relationship between the lack of availability of good-paying jobs for teenagers and the lure to teens posed by fast drug money.

In responding to Ben's query, the young Brother was making the point that minimum-wage jobs do not pay enough to enable a teen to meet what this youth seemed to be categorizing as important, maybe necessary, expenses. He cited an example of a person making around $120 per week and having to buy a pair of tennis shoes. What the Brother said then was awfully close to profound in its implications. He stated that a pair of tennis shoes costs $116 and went on to point out that the purchase of the shoes would eat up practically all of a week's pay.

What's so profound about the above? First of all, tennis shoes in adult male sizes can be purchased for as little as $20, depending on the brand and the store from where the shoes are bought. They can be even less expensive if a person is looking out for special sales. Of course, on the other end of the scale are some really expensive shoes. For instance, both Nike and Reebok have shoes entering the market shortly, if not already, that retail at around $170. These tennis shoes are being marketed as "high-tech" and feature pumps that en-

able them to be inflated in certain parts for some kind of "ultra-custom" fit. Despite this wide range of prices, the young Brother seemed oblivious of the fact that there is any such thing as a relatively inexpensive tennis shoe. More likely, however, - and this is where the profound implications enter the picture - what the Brother was saying was something to the effect that image-upkeep requires young African men in Omaha to purchase $116 tennis shoes.

In other words, tennis shoes(of the expensive variety--the top of the line of, for example, British Knights, Air Jordans, etc.) have become important status symbols, veritable BMWs or Mercedes for the feet. And as we well know, there have been instances in many of this country's large urban areas in which young African men have killed or been killed over such tennis shoes, as well as ropes(the large gold necklaces often sported by rappers, crack dealers, and others), and other status symbols. That people are actually taking lives and losing them is all the evidence necessary to show the importance being attached by our youth to these status symbols.

The blame for this can be easily laid. It falls directly upon product manufacturers and the commercial media through which they use every imaginable trick to convince our youth that they MUST have these various products in order to be hip. The blame also falls on <u>us</u> for allowing our televisions to function as surrogate parents and for giving our youth models of people obsessed with materialist America's trinkets. If some of our youth are willing to kill or die over tennis shoes, it is but a logical extension of some of us sacrificing our integrity in our token corporate positions for houses in the suburbs or selling out our community in political jockeying for luxury cars. We reap what we sow.

-Editor

Letter: Why Bible-Study

(The writer of the following, Portia Anderson, has appeared recently on the public-affairs television program "To Be Equal" and discussed with the host, Carney Rountree, the issue of African identity of Biblical figures and related subjects. Portia was born in Chicago to Porter and Sadie Steele and moved with her family to Mississippi at age fourteen. She received her B.S. in biology in 1962 and was married shortly afterwards. She and her husband are living in Omaha and are the parents of three daughters. In the letter which follows, Portia speaks of the motivations that were at the root of her interest in Biblical history and allegory and her subsequent and ongoing research of questions related to the African origins of and influences upon Judaism and Christianity.)

I have always been conscious of my Blackness and the injustices of the Ameri-"kkk"-an way. I have also had a knack for creative writing. Therefore, when I began to read the Bible, after a "born-again" experience in 1978, I began to uncover some startling and profound statements of Blackness that were real eye-openers. I was reading the Bible for spiritual growth only and had no idea there was anything pertaining to racial identities in "The Book." My inspirational insights had already caused me to start a spiritual journal but, as my journal began to grow and the Black identities began to manifest themselves more and more, I realized I was finding my roots in the Word of God. I knew I was writing more than my spiritual thoughts for the day but was beginning to chronicle our history as a people of antiquity and importance. My enthusiam, however, soon led me into the face of much ridicule and rebuke as I tried to express my new-found theology to others. This soon forced me to let my pen and paper be my only confidant. I realized the world was not ready for

the truth. And, of course, for me, it is my people who represent the world.

These eleven years since have led me into a spiritual growth of which my quest for knowledge of self(through African studies) is a great part and a part which I will be committed to for the rest of my life. This Black Perspective through the Bible has certainly grown beyond my wildest expectations. The information available would take several lifetimes to find and chronicle.

I can say that each time I was put down for trying to express my discoveries, I was only driven further into my research. I have maintained my belief that those things which I have been attempting to uncover will come to light. I realize that all may not come to light in my lifetime but am determined to leave my own children a legacy they can pass on to their children.

It is interesting to see how the Lord moves when we least expect. I knew I had to write a book on the roles played by Africa and Africans in Biblical history but had no idea that I would have an opportunity to be on local t.v. to tell of my discoveries. I see the work I am doing on this book not as only my work but the Lord's and my people's, at least those who want to take the responsibility for hearing the truth and acting upon it. There is a great challenge to our people for taking the responsibility to read, learn the truth, and tell it. Yet some of us are locked into complacency so deeply that we would rather let the "Sleeping Dogs" lie, so to speak. I am confident that my book will find a publisher and am hopeful that it will be as great a source of enlightenment for my people as the discoveries which led to my writing it have been for me.

-Portia Anderson

FLAME Editorial Policy

The HARAMBEE FLAME, the monthly publication of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization(parent chapter of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization, Inc.), is a pan-Africanist newsletter. The FLAME's priority, with respect to news and views, is African people, events and developments which affect us and are, or should be, of concern to us. The FLAME does not recognize any distinction between African people based solely on place of birth. References in the FLAME to African people are made on the basis of our common ancestry. An exception to this is the reprinting of articles, or excerpts thereof, from other publications, in which cases we do not alter "black" or other terms designating African people. This is our practice because we do not wish to diminish the integrity and authenticity of the articles we excerpt from.

Articles contained in the FLAME do not necessarily represent the official positions of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization unless they are accompanied by a statement identifying the views as being those of the organization. Generally speaking, all unsigned articles are by the editor, Wonashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa(pka David Rice).

We encourage you to submit articles to the FLAME. Please enclose with your submission a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Articles should not exceed 900 words, though longer pieces will not be automatically rejected. Short stories are subject to the same restriction with respect to length. We also welcome poetry and graphics. We are looking for poems which address African folks' lives, the conditions we face, and our struggles to rise above those things which hinder us. We are <u>not</u> looking for poems which sacrifice power and beauty for the sake of uniform rhythm and/or rhyme. Send submissions to the editor c/o HARAMBEE FLAME; P.O. Box 2500; Lincoln, NE; 68502-0500.

From Other Sources

Underground Radio Seeks To Educate Community

"WTRA, 'guerrilla radio', broadcasts from behind the wall...

"WTRA's message comes out from the John Hay Homes housing project carried by weak radio waves but charged with the crusading spirit of its mastermind operator. The project sits, in the shadow of the domed capitol building, behind the wall that blocks the blighted project from the casual glance of the speeding motorists making their way downtown...

"Until recently, Readus(Dewayne Readus, voice and operator of the station) regularly operated the station from an upstairs room in his sister's apartment. The station covered a radius of one-and-one-half miles, just enough to reach the housing unit and some of the surrounding Black community.

"In April, Readus was forced to shut down, after a year of unhindered operation. His unblunted criticism of the police department is the reason for the silencing, Readus charges...

"Readus' controversial music and talk format had already attracted the ire of many of the city's Black leadership whom he consistently criticized...

"Will Gray, an inspector with the Federal Communications Commission(FCC), visited Readus after he aired coverage of a hostage incident where the police cordoned off a Black neighborhood after a man took his girlfriend and her sister hostage.

"The man and the girlfriend died in the incident from self-inflicted bullet wounds, according to the police. Readus, however, took to the air with charges that the police shot both victims after

turning the hostage situation into a 'military operation'.

"During a meeting with Gray, Readus admitted he didn't have a license and argued that because of the low wattage of the station, he didn't need one. But he was fined $750, which Readus has vowed not to pay until he has his day in court...

"Today Readus operates what he calls 'guerrilla radio', a 'sneak attack' approach to getting his message out at varying times during the week..."

-Excerpted from "Guerrilla Radio," which appears on pages 4 and 18 of the 9/11/89 THE FINAL CALL(Chicago, ILL).

Virginia Beach: A Different Story

"At 10 p.m. on September 2 Virginia Beach, a resort area in southern Virginia, was rocking. One hundred thousand Black students and youth from cities and schools up and down the East Coast were in the city to party. It was Greek Fest, a three-day party to mark the end of the summer that has become an annual tradition among Black students...

"By 4 a.m. on September 3 Virginia Beach...The rocks - and bottles and anything else available - were being thrown by the students as they fought to defend themselves against one of the most brutal and massive military attacks on Black people in decades...Police from all of the surrounding towns, the State Police, and hundreds of National Guard troops took over the streets. The National Guard carried M-16 assault rifles and rode around in combat jeeps and helicopters. The State and local police wore heavy-duty riot equipment and used their long riot clubs to beat anybody Black who they found on the street...

"Roadblocks were set up to seal off the city from

incoming traffic...The only people allowed to enter the city were those who could show ID that proved they lived there...

"By the time the dust began to settle on Tuesday, September 5, 100 local businesses had been trashed, dozens of Black students and youth had been injured, and two Black men had been shot by what the police claim are 'unknown assailants'. National news reports that the Black youth were shooting at police turned out to be false. At least 260 students and local Black youth were arrested over the weekend. They were held in a fenced-in tennis court three miles from the beachront--an open-air prison created especially for the weekend...

"Local authorities had worked to sabotage the Greek Fest for almost a year. Radio interviews with local hotel owners indicate that vague rumors about potential property damage and a 'near riot' situation at last year's festival have been circulating in Virginia Beach...The city outright refused to allow any organized functions to be held on city property. Even Pepsi Cola corporation had volunteered to be a corporate sponsor of the weekend and to provide a large sum of money for a welcoming tent and a few organized activities for the students. But the city turned them down flat. The local NAACP had tried to meet with city officials for months in order to talk about plans for the Labor Day festival. Again the city refused to talk.

"...Earlier in the year the city council passed new laws which increased police powers to disperse 'illegal assemblies'. One of these laws allowed the police to legally launch an assault against the students without ever formally declaring a curfew or issuing an order to disperse. And on August 21, two weeks before the sudents arrived, city officials asked the governor of Virginia to order a unit of the National Guard Military Police on standby alert at a nearby military camp. Governor Baliles signed the order on Friday, just as

the students began arriving at the resort...

"As the first few students began to trickle into town on Friday, September 1 they were greeted by riot-geared cops with gas masks standing on every corner. Hotels issued strict rules that the students had to follow...The rules included a nighttime curfew, a no-visitors policy, and the demand that every student wear an ID bracelet proving that they were renting a room at the hotel.

"Some restaurants and shops outright refused to serve the Black students while others jacked their prices up two and three times higher than usual. A local hotel worker told the RW that students were being charged $250 a night, two and a half times what the hotel normally charges...

"As one student told the RW: 'You put all this together and you can see why we were mad and ready to go off. I don't care what these people down here are saying. We just took everything and tried to party even under these conditions. The city says we were looting and that's why the police attacked. That's a lie. Even the newspapers have to say that no store windows were broke or anything until after the police attacked..."

-Excerpted from "Outrage At Virginia Beach," which appears on pages 4 and 6 of the 9/11/89 REVOLUTIONARY WORKER(Chicago, ILL).

Africans In Britain: A Familiar Ring

"The cluster of decaying streets tucked behind Liverpool city centre is home to Britain's oldest black community. It was founded 400 years ago by the descendants of slaves whose journey from the Guinea coast stopped at the port where it is said that every brick is cemented with a slave's blood. But the passage of time has brought few changes to black Liverpudlians.

"Since 1973, they have only moved two miles from the docks into the postal district of Liverpool 8, otherwise known as Toxteth...

"Until 1981, few people outside of Mersey-side knew where Liverpool 8 was. But, that year, it became part of a chain reaction of violent disturbances sweeping through the country's black communities, going down in history as the first place in Mainland Britain where CS gas was used.

"Eight years on, Lord Gifford, one of Britain's leading radical lawyers, described race relations in Liverpool as 'uniquely horrific' and warns that the consequences could be grave if the grievances of local ethnic minorities continued to be overlooked. His report, 'Loosen the Shackles', reveals discrimination on all fronts - housing, health, education, employment - but reserves special mention for the police, whose racist attitudes and heavy handed approach, he says, should be the subject of a Home Office inquiry...

"The report is a result of a nine-month-long inquiry chaired by Lord Gifford, which held meetings, interviews and took written submissions to gather evidence. One of the biggest targets of criticism is the people who commissioned the report, Liverpool City Council. Black people make up 8 percent of Liverpool's population and the council is the city's largest employer. In 1987, it employed only 490 black staff out of a workforce of 30,410 - just 1.6 percent.

"As the city's biggest landlord, Liverpool council also has a lot to answer for. Years of discrimination have ensured that black people stay put in Liverpool 8...Even when black people do get transfers to other areas, racial abuse, threats and violence often force them back to Toxteth...

"On education, Lord Gifford is highly critical of Liverpool schools, especially at secondary school

level. He goes as far as to say that some teachers are openly racist and refuse to accept that there is a colour problem...

"Few black youngsters go on to higher education because they do not see black people working in worthwhile jobs. At least 50 percent of Liverpool 8 is unemployed, twice as high as the rest of the city, and even jobs requiring no qualifications seem hard to come by when you are black...

"Granby Street, the heart of Liverpool 8, has become a notorious market for the open sale of heroin and cocaine, mostly by people from outside the area. The trouble is, the police are doing nothing about it.

"Instead, they pour all their energies into riot control, said Lord Gifford: 'Police go around in protective gear and riot vans in situations that con't call for it at all. They seem to regard the black community as some kind of potential cauldron, which they have to put down by force.'...

"He added: 'We have very disturbing evidence that it is , in effect, a deliberate policy not to bother with drug dealing'"...

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-Excerpted from "Frozen In Time," which appears on pages 1510 and 1511 of the 9/11-17/89 WEST AFRICA(London, Eng.).

Gbadolite Accord And Savimbi's Maneuverings

"...That handshake(between President Jose Eduardo

Dos Santos of Angola and Jonas Savimbi, chief of the U.S.- and South African-backed movement, Unita) described enthusiastically as 'historic', came at the close of a summit at Gbadolite in Zaire. Eighteen heads of state agreed there that a ceasefire should come into effect in Angola starting on June 24. But almost nothing else that they agreed to was made public. Indeed, they specifically agreed to keep the deliberations secret.

"This played straight into the hands of Unita, with Savimbi claiming that Gbadolite was a great victory for his movement. In repeated interviews and triumphant broadcasts over the Unita radio station, Savimbi rejected the main planks of the Angolan government's peace plan. These include Savimbi's withdrawal from the political scene and the 'integration' of Unita members into Angolan society.

"In effect, Savimbi claimed that Gbadolite threw out the Angolan government plan, while the Luanda authorities claimed the summit had endorsed it. As long as the proceedings remained shrouded in secrecy there was no way of knowing who was right.

"Even worse, the war continued. To the evident surprise of Dos Santos and his government, Savimbi simply ignored the ceasefire...

"The eight heads of state who had first gotten the Angolan peace plan moving back in May met again in Harare, Zimbabwe, on August 22. In addition to Dos Santos and Mobuto(of Zaire), they included the presidents of Mozambique, Congo, Gabon, Sao Tome, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

"In their final communique, the eight heads of state made public the hitherto secret parts of the Gbadolite accord, and this came as a severe slap in the face for Savimbi. At Gbadolite, they said, Savimbi had agreed to go into 'voluntary and temporary' exile in a country not bordering on Angola.

It had been agreed that the Angolan constitution would not be altered and that Angola would thereremain a 1-party state. Unita members would be 'integrated' into existing Angolan institutions in accordance with their individual capacities.

"In other words, for two months Savimbi had told lies about Gbadolite. As Mozambican President Joachim Chissano put it, the rest of the Unita leadership 'did not in fact know what was decided at Gbadolite, because Savimbi did not tell them'.

"De Klerk(of South Africa) has met with Mobutu, and the two men are obviously looking for ways to insure a strong position for Unita in a postwar Angola--even if it means that Savimbi himself will be ditched.

"The Harare meeting also called for an end to all foreign interference in Angola. Given that the Cubans are already leaving, this can only refer to the Bush administration and its continued largesse for Savimbi. The Angolans hold Washington largely responsible for Unita's refusal to adhere to the ceasefire. As long as tens of millions of dollars are flowing into Savimbi's coffers, they believe, he is under no pressure to negotiate seriously..."

-Excerpted from "Unita-Angola Handshake: A Sad Fake," which appears on page 18 of the 9/13/89 THE GUARDIAN(N.Y.).

Grey Is The Color Of My True Love's Hair

Skin dark as coal, cornrowed, afroed, natural woman cloned from the sable pigment of too many years trying to out love hate.

Walking the middle passage of right, in the gutters of wrong. Making high yellow compositions from blue/black earth tones, by products of savage lust on some Mary's land plantation.

Skin dark as coal, cornrowed, afroed, natural woman cloned from the sable pigment of too many years trying to out love hate.

Oh, for the power to hold back the passage of time, for one eternal moment, free to love as if there were no clocks, no calendars, to tell us when to stop.

Skin dark as coal, cornrowed, afroed, natural woman cloned from the sable pigment of too many years trying to out love hate.

Gray is the color of my true love's hair, older now from waiting for me to stop performing in cheap movies, starring too old co-stars in the role of Simon Legree.

Skin dark as coal, cornrowed, afroed, natural woman cloned from the sable pigment of too many years trying to out love hate.

-Walt Gholson

This Brother, originally from Virginia, is a performance poet, visual artist, and theatre arts specialist, and is now studying print journalism at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln.

Back In Time

"What results from the opinion of philosophers, learned men, and those skilled in observation of the heavenly bodies, is that the world is round as a sphere, of which the waters are adherent and maintained upon its surface by natural equilibrium. It is surrounded by air, and all created bodies are stable on its surfaces, the earth drawing to itself all that is heavy in the same way as a magnet attracts iron." -by the Moorish(African) scientist, El Idrisi. This was written in the 12th century, around 300 years prior to Columbus' journey to the Americas.

-Source: MAN, GOD, AND CIVILIZATION by John G. Jackson; page 275

"Columbus has been hailed as the discoverer of America; but Columbus himself never succombed to any such delusion. According to Harold G. Lawrence:

> 'Proof of this is evidenced by the fact that Columbus was informed by some men, when he stopped at the Cape Verde Islands of the coast of Africa, that Negroes had been known to set out into the Atlantic from the Guinea coast in canoes loaded with merchandise and steering toward the west. The same Christopher Columbus was further informed by the Indians of Hispaniola when he arrived in the West Indies that they had been able to obtain gold from black men who had come from across the sea from the south and southeast...It must also be added that Amerigo Vespucci on his voyage to the Americas witnessed these same black men out in the Atlantic returning to Africa(AFRICAN EXPLORERS OF THE NEW WORLD, p. 6, by H.G. Lawrence).'"

-Source: INTRODUCTION TO AFRICAN CIVILIZATIONS by John G. Jackson, page 241.

Announcements

Fulani Ensemble On Tour In U.S.

"'La Musique des Peuhls du Senegaal', Folklore Of The Fulani People, is one of those rare traditional music ensembles whose combined rigorous technique and sophisticated delivery of 11th century court music offer 'edutainment' at its best. Amadou Thiam, master musician in both Senegaal and France, leads the group supported by five other Bambaados(Griots).

"The company is touring to share true representational Fulani culture as well as heightening awareness of the desertification of the Sahel. The ensemble will be available October 26-November 7, 1989 for full performances. For more information, contact: A.E.L.O. Music Group
82 Wall St., Suite 1105
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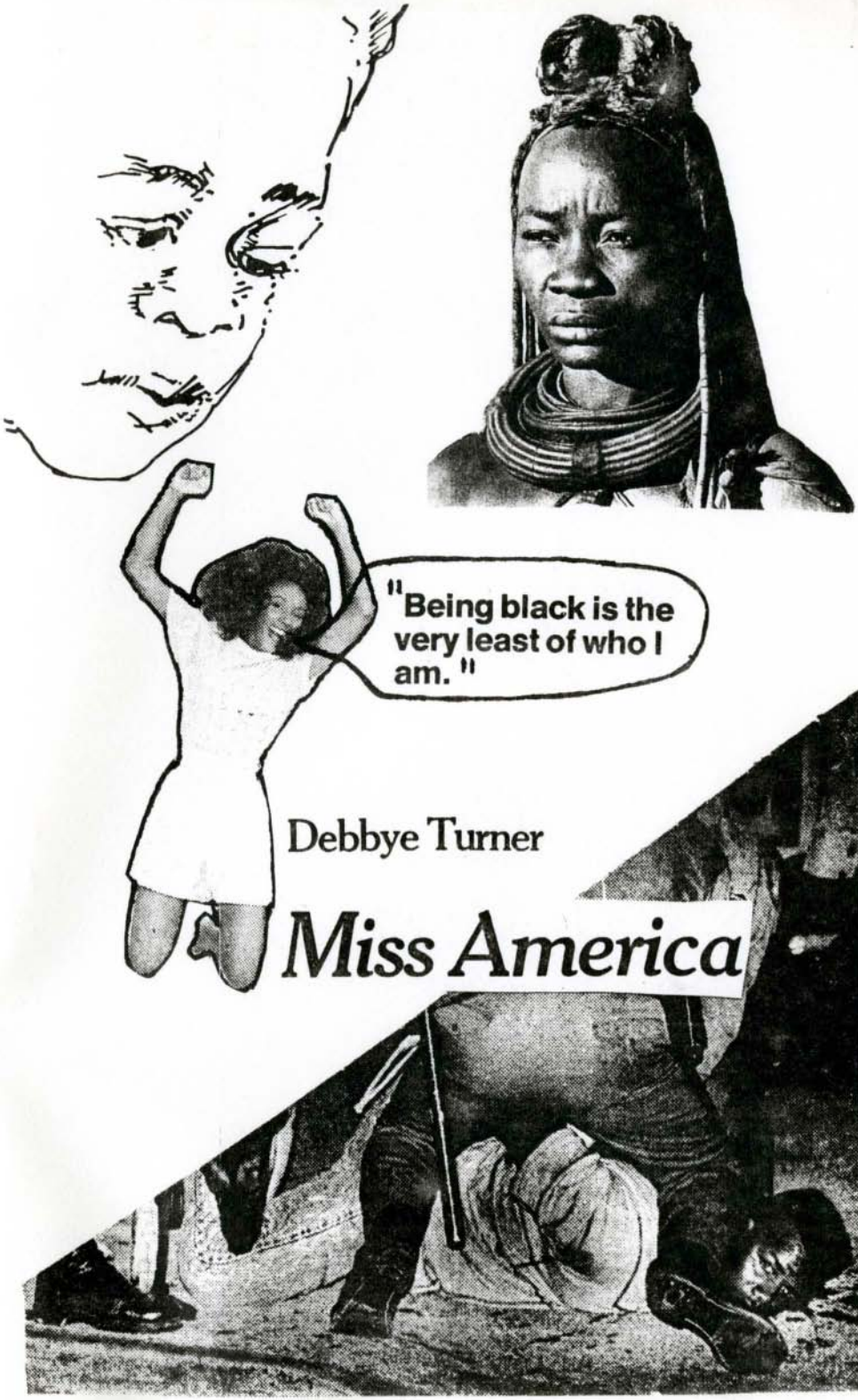

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